

# Writer Accused of

By Sari Gilbert  
Special to the Star-News

ROME — The idea of an American writer brought to trial, in Italy, for allegedly defaming the memory of an Italian Pope sounds like it would make a good subject for a novel or a movie. But for American author and screenwriter Robert Katz, the above scenario is real life.

Katz, in fact, together with Italian producer Carlo Ponti and director George

Cosmatos, is currently fighting a libel suit brought by Contessa Eleonora Rosignani, the greatniece of the late Pope Pius XII, charging that the film "Massacre in Rome," taken from Katz's book "Death in Rome," "defamed and offended the memory of the supreme Pontiff Pius XII."

"Massacre in Rome" tells the story of the "Fosse Ardeatine" incident in March 1944 in which 333 Roman citizens, many of them Jewish, were executed by the Gesta-

po in reprisal for the killing of 33 German S.S. troops by Italian partisans.

The film, like the book, claims that Pius XII was aware of Nazi plans for the massacre but made no attempt to prevent it. The Vatican, on the other hand, has always denied that the Pope had any foreknowledge of the reprisal.

Katz, who could face a prison term of up to eight years, has claimed that his three years of research for "Death in Rome" document-

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Washington Star-News  
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## Defaming Pope Pius XII

his conviction that Pope Pius XII knew about the impending massacre but did not intervene in order not to endanger the orderly German retreat from Rome and the city's occupation by advancing allied troops.

Katz says his research was based on examination of Italian and American archives as well as on interviews with persons involved in the incident, such as former S.S. Col. Eugen Dollman who, he maintains, told him the Pope had been informed of Nazi plans and

could have prevented them. Earlier this year, however, in an interview with a Roman Catholic news agency here Dollman denied that he had ever made such allegations.

Katz's lawyers have asked for testimony from the present Pontiff, Paul VI, who was a high Vatican official at the time of the massacre as well as a good friend of Pius. The only word from the Pope so far came in early March when, in the course of the usual Sunday blessing, the Pontiff

told an assembled crowd of 8,000 that "Pius XII was a man who strongly defended justice and peace, and was concerned for every human misfortune... especially during the war years."

The Pope added, obviously in reference to the Katz-Ponti trial, that Pius XII was "totally against knowingly not interfering whenever he could wherever human life and liberty were endangered."

Other witnesses requested by the defense are former S.S. Col. Herbert Kap-

pler still serving life imprisonment in Gasta, in southern Italy, for ordering the massacre, (in the film the role of Kappler is played by British actor Richard Burton) and Jesuit historian Father Robert Graham who has defended Pius XII against Katz's allegations.

The prosecution has asked that Luigi Cardinal Traglia, who was chancellor of the Holy Roman Church in 1944 and Max Gerson, formerly an American counterespionage agent, be allowed to testify.

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